

New details emerge about abusive priest's history with Springfield Catholic diocese



By Stephanie Barry | sbarry@repub.com

on March 29, 2016 at 9:52 PM, updated March 30, 2016 at 8:50 PM

Updates a story posted Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 1:30 p.m.

SPRINGFIELD — The Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield on Tuesday night released new details about the disciplinary history of the late **Rev. Paul Archambault, subject of a recent civil settlement** who committed suicide in 2011 when confronted about the abuse of a teenage boy, officials have said.

Archambault fatally shot himself with one of his own guns at Our Lady of Sacred Heart rectory. He did not leave a note, according to police. But, diocesan officials on Tuesday conceded the suicide was likely prompted by a confrontation over the abuse. It has not been publicly disclosed who reportedly confronted the priest.

The 42-year-old Archambault had been ordained just six years earlier. A lawsuit filed in 2013, when the victim was 20, states that he began sexually assaulting the victim, "John Doe," when the boy was 13; the molestation continued for about four years. The complaint alleges the abuse took place at a Chicopee parish, a shrine to the Virgin Mary in Vermont and at Archambault's father's home in Northampton.

The victim is a Chesterfield native but has not been named in court records or by the diocese. As a policy, The Republican typically does not name victims of sexual abuse.

The diocese deemed the allegations against Archambault "credible" and settled with the victim for an as-yet undisclosed money judgment in late January. The settlement was announced earlier on Tuesday. Church officials have made a point to note that Archambault knew the victim and his family long before the priest was ordained.

Plaintiff's lawyer John Connor argued the diocese ignored previous "red flags" raised by parishioners about Archambault's behavior around children.

A spokesman for the diocese confirmed that the church had received complaints about Archambault but thoroughly investigated them. The diocese found no "actionable" infractions. It concluded, however, that Archambault's potential issues were a result of "immaturity" and that he should be more "closely supervised" when he was reassigned to St. Mary's Church in Hampden in 2008. This was according to a statement released later on Tuesday.

Archambault was ordained in 2005 and took a leave of absence just a year after becoming a priest. He was transferred between a handful of parishes in Chicopee, Springfield, Hampden and elsewhere, according to diocesan records.

"(The Review Board) recommended he be more closely supervised." ~ Mark

In the later statement, diocesan spokesman Mark Dupont conceded the church received complaints about Archambault years before his ordination.

CLERGY SEX ABUSE

News Links: Priest accused of abusing minor dismissed, former teacher barred from prep school after admitting sexual misconduct, and more

National activist calls for resignation of Springfield bishop over handling of recent priest abuse case

New details emerge about abusive priest's history with Springfield Catholic diocese

Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield reaches settlement, adds another name to its list of priests accused of sexual abuse

Study says clergy abuse scandal cost U.S. Catholic Church \$2 billion in charitable giving

Dupont, Springfield diocesan spokesman

"The first meeting before the (diocesan) Review Board involving Fr. Archambault occurred a few years prior to his ordination. This was related to concerns that he was not showing good judgment in maintaining proper boundaries with young people. This was referred both to the diocesan investigator (a former Massachusetts State Police trooper) and to the Massachusetts State Police. Both investigations came up without findings as no one came forward with any allegation of abuse. The Review Board at the time felt these actions were, in part, a result of some immaturity issues. As part of his formation, he was counseled on appropriate behavior," Dupont wrote in an email.

In 2007, the new priest was spotted in public at a Vermont spiritual setting massaging the victim's neck and back, according to Dupont.

"Again, a person whose family knew Rev. Archambault for many years, outside his clergy role. In fact, at least one parent (of the victim) was present when this incident was observed by a member of the Review Board who coincidentally happened to be at the same spiritual center. The Review Board member immediately reported this incident," Dupont said.

Archambault once again appeared before the Diocesan Review Board with a lawyer, he said.

With him, he brought a certificate citing formal training in massage therapy, according to Dupont. Archambault also arrived at the hearing with the victim, who was poised to serve as a character witness, Dupont added.

"Absent any evidence of abuse with no victim coming forward (in fact, apparently willing to speak on his behalf) the Review Board could not establish a finding of a credible allegation; rather they recommended he be more closely supervised. That recommendation was taken into consideration when Rev. Archambault was subsequently assigned in 2008," he said.

The diocese placed Archambault back under the guidance of a pastor that year, Dupont explained.

Since the settlement was reached, the diocese **has added Archambault's name** to its running list of accused priest abusers. Officials said they will reach out to each parish with which he was associated.

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2016 MassLive LLC. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of MassLive LLC.

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

[▶ Ad Choices](#)